

## TIPS FOR GRANDDADS

**Dr. Arthur Kornhaber, who has done perhaps the most extensive research on grand parenting, writes:**

**Age is fascinating to children. Wrinkles in a grandparent's face are a source of mystery.... Baking bread out of flour and pulling fish from still ponds are sources of wonder when shared by an awed youngster and a patient grandparent. Grandparents can be heroic figures in children's humdrum lives.**

**Kornhaber continues: "Grandparents are similar to the Wizard of Oz. For adults, they have no real powers, but they are magic in the eyes of their grandchildren."**

**Grandfathers, you're magic. Your grandchildren make you that way.**

**You're valuable because you can provide objectivity, build a sense of family history, and influence generations with your relaxed temperament and your living example of healthy manhood. Here are a few more practical suggestions especially for granddads:**

### *1. Respect your children as parents*

**There is a delicate balance involved in making your contribution without transgressing from effective grandfathering to interfering with the father's role. You'll run up against issues of discipline, lifestyle choices, expectations, and spoiling. Offering unsolicited advice is overstepping proper boundaries. Realize that your children are going to make mistakes; they need to learn on their own, just as you did. Make it clear to them—through words and actions—that they make the final decisions, regardless of what you think.**

**Don't forget—you're still a father as well as a grandfather. In deferring to your children, you protect their dignity, build their confidence as parents, affirm their authority with their kids, and preserve the peace. Such an approach may very well earn you opportunities to offer advice when the young parents realize they need it.**

### *2. Spend individual time with each grandchild*

**Just like with fathering, in-depth relationships are built during time alone together. Being alone with a grandchild allows her to just be "herself." There's no sibling rivalry diverting her attention, and no demands and consequences to worry about from her mom and dad. That allows her to ask more thoughtful questions, listen better, and learn more. It's a great opportunity to transmit values that are important to you. And, you don't need to be told, spending time with grandchildren is rewarding in itself.**

**Gordon Dalbey writes about a group of older men in a California church called the “Caleb Corps.” They derived their name from the Biblical figure that helped settle the Promised Land for the Israelites. Caleb says, “Look at me! I am eighty-five years old and am just as strong today as I was when Moses sent me out [at age forty]. I am still strong enough for war or anything else.” At eighty-five, Caleb is set to drive giants out of the land and claim an inheritance for his children and grandchildren.**

**The men of the Caleb Corps believe they have something that younger generations need. So the members’ visit the homebound, hospitalized, and imprisoned. They tutor school children. “When a man in the congregation retires, we give him one week,” says one member. “Then three or four of us are on his doorstep, calling on him to come out and minister with the rest of us.”**

**Becoming a grandfather is not retirement; it’s a call to service. Your fathering skills don’t dissolve when your kids move away. Any soldier in reserve must be ready to come into active duty with a single call. Your grandchildren need you. And so do the children down the street, in your place of worship, and in your community. There’s still a lot you can give.**

**Granddads, your example brings a sense of hope to your children and grandchildren, who will honor you for years to come. They may not hold yearly memorial services—they may not even bring flowers to your grave on Memorial Day. Instead, they’ll honor you by being the best fathers and wives-of-fathers they can be. Your legacy will be a blessing to children who come along several generations from now. In all things listen, listen, love, love.**